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TAX
(202) 514-2007
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ALABAMA WOMEN SENTENCED FOR ROLES IN TAX FRAUD CONSPIRACY

WASHINGTON – Betty Washington, a resident of Montgomery County, Ala., was sentenced today to 21 months in prison and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$1,440,632 for conspiring to file false claims for refunds, the Justice Department announced. Wendy Delbridge, also of Montgomery County, was sentenced to five days in jail time and six months home confinement for her role in the same conspiracy and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$45,219. Both women pleaded guilty in January 2011.

According to court documents, between October 2009 and September 2010, Washington conspired with others to fraudulently obtain tax refunds. The conspiracy involved using stolen identities to file false income tax returns claiming refunds. At the behest of co-conspirator Alchico Grant, Washington opened up a bank account at a local bank to receive tax refunds from the scheme. Sixteen different refunds, issued in the name of 16 different individuals, were deposited into the bank account. When the bank closed the account because of the suspicious nature of the deposits, Washington opened new bank accounts at a credit union in her name and in the name of Central Alabama Financial Services. Over the course of several months, more than 300 false refunds were deposited into these bank accounts, totaling more than \$1.4 million in fraudulent refunds. To distribute the fraudulent refunds, Washington wrote checks and obtained official checks payable to various co-conspirators and associates and withdrew refund money in cash as well. She retained a portion of the refunds for herself.

Delbridge played a similar role. At co-conspirator Veronica Dale's direction, she also set up a bank account at a local bank to receive fraudulent refunds. When the bank closed the account because it was receiving tax refunds that were not in Delbridge's name, she opened a new bank account at a credit union. Between February 2010 and June 2010, the two bank accounts received over \$50,000 in false tax refunds, which Delbridge withdrew in cash and provided to Dale. In return, Delbridge was paid a portion of the fraudulently obtained refunds.

Along with three other co-defendants, Dale and Grant were indicted in December 2010 for their roles in the conspiracy. Grant was indicted a second time in April 2011 for again being involved in a scheme to fraudulently obtain tax refunds using stolen identities. On April 28, 2011, Grant's pretrial release was revoked and he was ordered detained. Both Dale and Grant are currently awaiting trial.

Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation agents investigated these cases, and Justice Department Tax Division trial attorneys Jason Poole and Michael Boteler, along with Assistant U.S. Attorney Jared Morris, are prosecuting the cases.

For more information about the Tax Division and its enforcement efforts, visit www.justice.gov/tax

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